

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ADDIS 08027 101544Z

41

ACTION AF-18

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9989

INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMCONSUL ASMARA

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 8027

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS CASC ET

SUBJ: TENNECO FOUR

REF: A) STATE 147653 B) KHARTOUM 1626 C) ADDIS A-160

1. WITH REGARD REF B, WE HAVE ASCERTAINED THAT POLITICAL PRISONERS WHO HAVE THUS FAR BEEN AMNESTIED BY IEG DO NOT RPT NOT INCLUDE ELF. HOWEVER, THERE HAVE NOW BEEN HINTS APPEARING IN PRESS (REF C) THAT ARMED FORCES COORDINATING COMMITTEE MAY ULTIMATELY BE PREPARED TO AMNESTY ELF.

2. RELEASE OF ELF PRISONERS MIGHT BE FACILITATED EVEN MORE BY THE PRIMIN'S RECENT TELEVISION INTERVIEW (ADDIS 7216) STRESSING HIS DESIRE FOR RETURN TO MORE NORMAL SITUATION IN ERITREA AND FOR DECREASE OF TENSIONS THERE. IF IEG REACHED AN AGREEMENT WITH TENNECO CAPTORS TO RELEASE CERTAIN ELF PRISONERS IN EXCHANGE FOR TENNECO HASTAGES, IT COULD ANNOUNCE AT TIME OF RELEASE THAT THIS WAS BEING DONE AS PART OF NEW GOVERNMENTAL POLICY TOWARDS ERITREA. I WOULD WISH TO MENTION THIS POSSIBILITY DURING APPROACH TO IEG CALLED FOR IN REF A. CANADIAN AMBASSADOR REYNOLDS AGREES IT IS A PROMISING POSSIBILITY FOR EXPLORATION.

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PAGE 02 ADDIS 08027 101544Z

3. REYNOLDS RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS TODAY TO APPROACH IEG AND ENCOURAGE THE UNCONDITIONAL RELEASE OF SOME ELF PRISONERS AT PRESENT TIME. HE DOES NOT FAVOR THIS APPROACH AND HAS REQUESTED AN ALTERATION IN HIS INSTRUCTIONS. HE AND I BOTH FEEL THAT, EVEN IF IEG RELEASED SOME PRISONERS AT PRESENT TIME, WE WOULD NOT REALLY BE ANY CLOSER TO RELEASE OF TENNECO HOSTAGES. AS CAPTORS HAVE ALREADY INDICATED, NEGOTIATIONS WOULD STILL BE REQUIRED THEREAFTER AND IT SEEMS CERTAIN THAT ADDITIONAL DEMANDS WOULD THEN BE OUT FORWARD. WE BELIEVE TIME CAN BE SAVED BY MOVING DIRECTLY INTO NEGOTIATIONS REGARDING TOTAL CONCESSIONS WHICH IEG AND TENNECO WILL MAKE IN RETURN FOR RELEASE OF ALL TENNECO HOSTAGES. THE LANGUAGE OF REF A SUGGESTS THAT DEPARTMENT WAS ALSO THINKING IN TERMS SIMILAR TO THE GOC INSTRUCTIONS TO REYNOLDS. I WOULD THEREFORE APPRECIATE AUTHORIZATION TO USE THE TYPE OF APPROACH I HAVE SUGGESTED ABOVE. IN OTHER WORDS, THE THRUST OF THE APPROACH WOULD BE TO ASCERTAIN WHETHER THE IEG WOULD NOT FIND IT EASIER TO RELEASE CERTAIN ELF PRISONERS IN EXCHANGE FOR ALL TENNECO HOSTAGES BY PUBLICLY TYING THE RELEASES TO THE NEW ERITREAN POLICY AND/OR THE NEW AMNESTY POLICY. I WOULD OF COURSE CONTINUE TO REFRAIN FROM ANY "PRESCRIPTIVE" REPRESENTATIONS IN THIS CONTEXT.

4. UNLESS WORD IS SHORTLY RECEIVED THAT FONMIN ZEWDE IS ABOUT TO RETURN TO ADDIS, I WILL REQUEST AN APPOINTMENT WITH PRIMIN AFTER RECEIVING REPLY TO PARA 3. REYNOLDS WOULD MUCH PREFER TO AWAIT RETURN OF FONMIN, PRIMARILY BECAUSE HIS ATTITUDE IS SO LIBERAL REGARDING ERITREA, BUT REYNOLDS GOES ON HOME LEAVE JULY 13 AND FONMIN PROBABLY WILL NOT RETURN BEFORE THEN. I AM THEREFORE NOT SURE WHETHER HE WILL JOIN ME IN DEMARCHE TO PRIMIN.
WYMAN

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